



SOUTHWEST RESEARCH AND INFORMATION CENTER

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October 3, 2011

TO: Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future

VIA EMAIL

RE: Comments on Meridian Institute "Highlights" Summary of Denver breakout sessions

As a participant in the September 13, 2011 Denver Public Forum, there was much good information during the day. The panels included some of the organizations with important views that the Commission should consider, particularly the "Western Experience" that has not been adequately represented in the Commission's process and draft report.

But the Meridian Institute Summary was not reflective of the breakout session that I attended. The summary is very inadequate and should not be used by the Commission. Instead, the "raw notes" of the five breakout sessions should be posted to provide more detail and a more accurate account of the discussions.

The second paragraph of the Meridian Institute summary demonstrates the lack of complete and accurate information. The paragraph does not indicate the number of participants (about 60?) or the number of breakout sessions (five) nor that the participants were placed into the sessions based on pre-registrations.

The summary repeatedly uses "many," or "some," or "several," or, in one case, "significant minority" to reflect participants' views. In my session there were no "straw polls" nor were any other ways to accurately reflect participants viewpoints taken. Thus, there is no objective basis to use those modifiers. The summary should not have used those terms, but rather should say "one or more."

In many of the descriptions of the supposed viewpoints of participants, there is no discussion of what other views were expressed. For example, the first issue mentioned – "Values in the Siting Process" states that "many participants supported the notion that all siting processes need to be based on local consent of the host community to receive nuclear waste, on scientific concerns rather than political considerations, and on better cooperation between federal and state/local officials." In the breakout session that I attended there were significant concerns expressed about "local consent," including the need to consider the "region of influence" and that 21 people in the Skull Valley Goshute tribe was not adequate "local consent." Those important views are reflected in the summary. The discussion of separation of defense and utility waste in the breakout session that I attended is not reflected in what is in the summary

In the breakout session that I attended, there was discussion of issues that were totally omitted from the summary. For example, there was no specific support expressed for the draft report recommendation for "one or more geologic disposal facilities" because one repository would not be sufficient, so there was discussion about the recommendation being "two or more" or "more than one."

Conversely, there are issues in the summary that were not discussed in the breakout session that I attended. For example, "widespread support" for RD&D was not discussed; had I had the opportunity I would have raised concerns about how such support could be advocacy for particular sites or money for particular companies and national labs. The "caution against changing the Atomic Energy Act" was not discussed. I would have supported changing the AEA. "Radioactive Literacy" and "review boards" were not discussed in the breakout session I attended, and I would have raised specific concerns about those ideas based on negative experiences over the past decades.

There were apparently various understandings about the purpose of the breakout sessions, and it appears that the subjects and nature of the discussions were different in at least some of the sessions. That diversity was not reflected in the summary. Again, the "raw notes" should be posted on the BRC website as the most accurate report of what happened in those sessions.

Before the Denver meeting, I had suggested that there be a formal process, such as a survey form, so that participants that wished to do so could evaluate the breakout session and provide feedback about the summary. Neither of those things was done, and I reiterate the need for such actions at the forthcoming meetings.

The purposes of the breakout sessions at future public meetings should be clarified. Southwest Research and Information Center (SRIC) believes that the one- to three- minute public comment opportunities are insufficient. Thus, either those attending should be given much more time or the breakout sessions should be re-structured so that they provide the opportunity for attendees to have more detailed discussions about their responses to the draft report.

In addition, based on the Denver meeting, it appears that the Meridian Institute is incapable of producing an informative, accurate summary. Thus, instead of spending money on such a summary at future meetings, what should be produced are the notes of those sessions.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments and suggestions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Hancock". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Don" being more prominent than the last name "Hancock".

Don Hancock